

Islamic Speakers Bureau
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Islamic Speakers Bureau Tips for Teachers

Could Your Personal Views on Current Events Relating to the War on Terrorism and Impending War on Iraq Affect Your Academic Responsibility to be Objective & Neutral in Education?

1. If your knowledge of Middle Eastern culture or the Islamic faith is based mostly on what you've seen or heard on television or through other media sources, then please consider seeking more accurate information from objective or primary sources. We recommend the following websites & books:
 - a. Readings on Islam:
 - i. <http://islamicity.com/education/>
 - ii. Understanding Islam & the Muslims: The Muslim Family & World Peace by TJ Winter & John Williams (available on Amazon.com)
 - iii. The Vision of Islam: Visions of Reality, Understanding Religions by Sachiko Murata & William Chittick (available on Amazon.com)
 - b. Overview of Middle Eastern Societies:
 - i. <http://www.nitle.org/arabworld/index.php>
 - c. State Dept. of Education Approved Teachers Guide on Islam:
 - i. *Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom*, by the Council on Islamic Education (CIE). To order, go to:
<http://www.cie.org/store/teachingaboutislamandmuslims.asp>
 - d. Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) view of US media coverage relating to Iraq:
 - i. <http://www.fair.org/international/iraq.html>
 - e. News directly from the Arab World:
 - i. <http://www.arab.net/>
 - f. Books on portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in our popular culture:
 - i. *The TV Arab*, by Jack Shaheen (available on Amazon.com)
 - ii. *Reel Bad Arabs*, by Jack Shaheen (available on Amazon.com)
2. If you generally view Arabs and Muslims or their beliefs and practices in a negative way, then please consider either inviting a guest speaker into the classroom or taking part in open staff discussions with a knowledgeable

resource person who could answer your questions or address your concerns. We recommend speakers from the “Islamic Speakers Bureau” at (408) or (888) 296-7312 or <http://www.ing.org/speakers/request.asp>

3. If you feel afraid of students and/or parents who are of Middle Eastern or Muslim background, acknowledge your fears by communicating those feelings to an administrator or school counselor who can provide you with the necessary help & support.
4. Irrespective of your views towards the impending war on Iraq or other US policies relating to the war on terrorism, teachers should allow for questions and differences of opinion in the classroom, which must be grounded in **civil discourse and mutual respect**. Teachers should never encourage a particular viewpoint but rather provide the intellectual environment & learning process for students to come to their own conclusions about current events. Inviting speakers to the classroom might be a way to address specific perspectives.

Islamic Speakers Bureau Tips for Teachers #2

Understanding Students of Middle Eastern & Muslim Background During Times of Political Conflict That Involve the Middle East or Muslim World Regions

Some of your students of Middle Eastern or Muslim background may feel or exhibit any of the following symptoms due to the current political conflicts involving regions of the Middle East and Muslim world.

Just knowing about these may help you in your interaction with students of Middle Eastern and Muslim backgrounds & potentially guide your discussions on current events in the classroom, for which tips are provided separately. Not all students of Middle Eastern or Muslim backgrounds will exhibit these feelings. But if you sense that one of your students does, then we encourage you to please be sensitive towards that student and to provide him/her with the best possible learning environment under the circumstances. Thank you.

1. Some students may be afraid to come to school and their parents may be afraid to send them to school.
2. Some students from recent or even second-generation immigrants from Arab & Muslim countries may come from a family where current events eclipse all other concerns when the child is at home. If bombing of foreign countries is in progress, many families attempt daily or very frequent phone calls to relatives at all hours of the night, causing some relief but often much anxiety.

3. Some students may have relatives who died as a result of the crisis or continuing events. Choose appropriate words of comfort.
4. Some students may be suffering from fatigue, fear, or depression and lack of sleep due to current events.
5. Some students may be and are often afraid of being different and may be very reluctant to express personal views on the situation. Other students may feel an obligation to engage every person in their class in discussion on the issue.
6. Some students may be afraid that their teacher or principal may academically punish them for their views or contrive false or slanted disciplinary reports simply due to their ethnic or religious background.
7. Some students may be afraid of physical violence against them from fellow students.
8. Some students and parents of Middle Eastern & Muslim background expect to be treated unfairly by staff, teachers, and the principal.
9. Some students may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or degraded by statements or responses to current events by peers, teachers, and the school or U.S. government.
10. Some students may think that their own feelings and existence do not matter to peers, teachers, and school officials and they develop feelings of alienation because of current events.
11. Some students may feel generally overwhelmed by current events. Many students of Middle Eastern & Muslim background feel personally embattled in schools when persons of their own background perpetrate acts of violence or cause harm to the United States.
12. Some students feel emotionally torn apart for many, many months. They may exhibit depression, social withdrawal, and feelings of inappropriate guilt, inability to sleep and feelings of isolation.

Islamic Speakers Bureau Tips for Teachers #3

Discussing Current Events in the Classroom Relating to Political Conflict in the Middle East or Muslim World

1. Remind your students that the school is a place of safety for everyone in it, and that help and care for all students and staff is available and can be sought.
2. Make sure to let your students know that if they feel uncomfortable and fearful at school hours, they can voice their feelings to teachers, counselors, or other school officials.
3. Remember that students are both perceptive and impressionable. By promoting an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance in the classroom, you are preventing serious problems from arising.
4. Be supportive in words & deeds of a collective, inclusive, and positive feeling in the classroom & school. Avoid discussions that refer to “us” and “them”, especially with Muslim or Arab students.

5. In all verbal communication, body language and behavior be careful not to cause any student or teacher to feel separated or singled out due to their ethnic or religious background.
6. Remind your students that the social norm of the school does not support or allow any teasing, threats, or so-called joking about the current situation directed at any student, teacher, or school employee.
7. Avoid asking students of Middle Eastern or Muslim background to publicly comment on current events or suggest that they are the classroom “expert” on the current crisis or situation.
8. Do not expect any student, particularly those of Middle Eastern or Muslim background to openly denounce any attacks/incidents or endorse our government’s actions in order to be “acceptable” to the rest of the class. The First & Fourth Amendments upholds freedom of speech and privacy.
9. Remind your students that all Arabs are not Muslim and all Muslims are not Arabs. Furthermore, President Bush has said, *“We must be mindful that as we seek to win the war [on terrorism] that we treat Arab Americans and Muslims with the respect they deserve. I know that is your attitude as well; it’s certainly the attitude of this government, that we should not hold one who is Muslim responsible for any act of terror.”*
10. Remind your students that only the perpetrators are responsible for their actions; no religion condones violence against innocent people. John Ashcroft, U.S. Attorney General said, *“We must not descend to the level of those who perpetrated Tuesday’s [September 11th] violence by targeting individuals based on their race, their religion, or their national origin. Such reports of violence and threats are in direct opposition to the very principles and laws of the United States and will not be tolerated.”*
11. Provide public discussion about religious/ethnic beliefs and practices and how they differ from those who misuse them to support terrorist activity.
12. When discussing terrorism make sure to allow for comparative discussions on various types of terrorists: Timothy McVeigh, militia or white supremacist groups, & anti-abortion extremists in the U.S. Discuss the role of the media in its focus on certain groups, double standards, and lack of diverse views.
13. Provide public and repeated vocal support and respect for all human life.
14. Remind students about the principles of justice and equality that our country was founded on and the importance of recognizing the rights of all Americans, irrespective of their race, religion, or national background.